

FOLLOWING THE DREAM: A STUDY OF SELECTED GRADUATE
STUDENTS IN COUNSELING DEGREE PROGRAMS

By

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A Research Paper

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Education Specialist
With a Major in

Counseling and Psychological Services

Approved: 6 Semester Credits

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December, 2001

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ABSTRACT

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<u>Following the Dream: A Study of Selected Graduate students in Counseling</u>		
(Title)		
<u>Degree Programs</u>		
<u>Ed. S. in Counseling and Psychological Services Dr. Ed Biggerstaff December, 2001 62</u>		
(Graduate Major)	(Research Advisor)	(Month/Year) (No. of Pages)
<u>American Psychological Association (APA) Publication Manual</u>		
(Name of Style Manual Used in this Study)		

The concept of the *dream* is the foundation upon which Levinson's model of adult development rests. To discover, develop, confront, and adjust one's *dream* is an essential existential task. It is in meeting this task that one becomes more authentic. Authenticity has been identified as necessary for successful counselor development. Female graduate students nearing the completion of their counseling degree programs were interviewed to explore how the *dream* impacts their lives. The struggle to meet the multiple responsibilities and roles of having families, spouses and careers was evident in the way that they conserved their time and energy. The study participants described how turning points, mentoring relationships, and focusing upon self-care served to bring their *dreams*, including their educational goals, back into focus when they were in danger of becoming overwhelmed. Counseling educators are encouraged to keep these factors in mind when developing graduate counseling programs.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I did not realize when I chose the concept of the *dream* for a research topic that I would also be beginning an examination of my own dreams and aspirations. The process of writing this study has been a challenging one and I thank all of those who volunteered their time, their thoughts, and their opinions toward its creation.

I want to thank my mother for teaching me the importance of paying attention to details, my father for teaching me the value of determination and timing, and my daughters for sharing their young adulthood with me. Special thanks go to my husband, Mike, for threatening to pull the plug on my computer when I couldn't stop. I thank my friends for their gentle, hilarious, and sometimes outrageous insights.

I thank the members of my research committee Dr. Bill Bailey and Dr. David Rosenthal, and my research chair and field study advisor, Dr. Ed. Biggerstaff for their patience, encouragement, and honesty.

My heartfelt thanks go out to the four women who participated in this study. I applaud your courage, your commitment, and your stamina. May all of your *dreams* come true.

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"I have a dream..."

--Martin Luther King

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

It is in vividly imagining a future that one can determine what needs to be done to make that future real. First described by Daniel J. Levinson (1978) in his study of adult male development, a *dream* is an energizing vision of oneself that inspires action. It may include a career goal, a life-long ambition, or a path that one chooses to follow. Having a *dream* for the future can help a person find solutions to seemingly insurmountable problems. It inspires the courage needed to complete the existential tasks of finding meaning, being aware, taking responsibility, and confronting isolation. Humans exist in the natural environment, in the world of relationships with others, and in their own mind-bodies. "Once human beings mature, it is their individual responsibility to create reason and meaning in life by interacting courageously with their environment" (Vontress, 1988, p. 73). J. F. T. Bugental (1965) describes the focus on existential tasks as necessary for the development of effective counseling skills and authentic counseling relationships. Finding meaning, being aware, taking responsibility, and confronting isolation, are challenges each adult must face. Yet, it is rare that these universal existential tasks are addressed as such by most graduate level programs in human development disciplines (Vontress, 1996).

Engaging in a therapeutic relationship as well as striving for high-quality research requires an understanding of one's own motives. As a student of human development,

this researcher's pursuit of clarity has lead again and again to the study of the dreams that beckon us as well as the nightmares that drive us. Both professional and personal experience has underscored the challenge of discriminating between a fantasy devised to avoid life's challenges and a vision or dream that is the inspiration for meeting those same challenges.

Graduate training programs in counseling are rigorous. An instructor early in this researcher's masters program warned that each individual would, at some point in his or her tenure as a graduate student, face a seemingly insurmountable obstacle. As students compared their experiences, these events became known as "hitting the wall." Students experienced hitting their walls with varying degrees of success. Some of these students chose to withdraw from their counseling programs while some graduated with honors.

Current involvement in the training of graduate student counselors has provided an opportunity to revisit the challenges and rewards of committing oneself to a graduate counseling program. It has been written (Drebing & Gooden, 1991) that having a *dream* provides the courage and inspiration one needs to successfully meet existential challenges. Graduate education can certainly be challenging. If the ability to define for oneself a personal *dream* is an essential task of adulthood, then exploring the *dreams* of graduate counseling students is an important and as yet rarely researched topic. Having a well-developed *dream* could be the defining factor in meeting the challenges inherent in graduate counseling education and training. Ultimately, it could define how far a counselor has come towards developing her own authentic identity.

Statement of the Problem

No research has been conducted that addresses the relationship between having a *dream* and successfully meeting the requirements of graduate counseling programs (footnote 1). It is, therefore, the mission of this study to explore the meaning of the *dream* in the lives of female counseling students.

Purpose of the Study

The following are the purposes of this study as they relate to the concept of the *dream* and its impact on adult development. First, to discover whether or not female counseling students can articulate their *dreams*. Two, to explore to what extent female counseling students' *dreams* are impacted by their programs of study. And three, to inform those who develop, implement, and evaluate graduate counselor education and training programs about their female counseling students developmental needs.

Definition of Terms

The Dream. Levinson states, "in its primordial form, a *dream* is a vague sense of self-in-world, an imagined possibility of one's adult life that generates excitement and vitality" (1996, p.238). Over an individual's adult lifespan, the *dream* is developed, clarified, altered, abandoned, or brought to fruition. It may include life-long ambitions and career goals. The *dream* is the common thread that runs throughout the stages of adult development. A good working definition of a *dream* is the following:

"A personal dream may be thought of as the central goal or image that a person holds which best captures what they want to do or be in their life time. The dream is in one sense a concrete picture of what the individual wants to achieve or see take place in their future, but it also involves the general hopes and wishes the

person feels toward their adult life” (Drebing & Gooden, 1991, p. 281).

Assumptions

Although Levinson first created the concept of the *dream* for male development, it was later studied with the help of female subjects. It is assumed that Levinson’s (1978, 1996) description of the *dream* is accurate and applicable to the lives of women.

Limitations

This qualitative study has been limited to four women graduate students. They were selected from among three of the four graduate counseling programs offered at the University of Wisconsin-Stout. These programs are the K-12 Certification Counseling program, the Mental Health Guidance and Counseling program, and the Vocational Rehabilitation program. This study was not intended to compare one program with another or to evaluate these programs. This study did not compare women’s experiences with men’s experiences. Due to the smallness of the sample, it is not possible to generalize from this study to other populations.

- Much has been written about counseling theory and practice (Corey, 1986; Egan, 1986; Belkin, 1988), about counseling as a profession (Fong, 1990; Hanna & Bemak, 1997; Weikel & Palmo, 1989; Ginter, 1996), and about how to credential counselors within the helping professions (Gerstein & Brooks, 1990). Various authors have spelled out their preferred models for counselor training (Sherard & Fong, 1991; Arbuckle, 1975). Some work has been done to explore the connection between having a fundamental Dream and the ability to address existential tasks and so find meaning in life (Drebing & Gooden, 1991).

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter will explore a model of adult male and female development, the concept of the *dream*, and the existential challenges that the *dream* functions to address. Human development has been approached from many different theoretical stances, psychological, sociological, biological, and historical. Starting with Freud, the era of childhood has been a popular area of study. In recent years, the field of gerontology has added to our knowledge. But few have turned their investigative focus to the eras of early and middle adulthood. This is ironic, since this is the period of life where individuals make decisions and take on responsibilities that affect the rest of their lives. Levinson states, “The modern world has no established conception—scientific, philosophical, religious, or literary—of the life cycle as a whole and of its component phases” (1996, p. 14). By neglecting to study adult development in its totality, members of various scientific disciplines have produced fragmented theoretical models at best.

Levinson’s Model of Adult Development

One of the few to study adult development in any depth was Daniel J. Levinson (1978, 1986, 1996). Starting in 1967, Levinson spent the next twenty-seven years studying and writing about the lives of first men and then women. Levinson died in 1994, shortly after concluding his lengthy study of the interviews of forty-five women. Judy D. Levinson published his findings in 1996. In this last work, he reiterated his original premise; there appear to be a series of age-linked developmental stages that both men and women experience. These periods are marked by transitions, often stressful. He

stated, “This ... violates the conventional wisdom of our culture ... It appears to contradict the widespread finding that there is no comparable sequence of periods in the adult development of personality, cognition, occupational careers, families. I don’t know *why* this sequence exists, but that it does exist is indicated by the research evidence” (1996, p. 27). Levinson’s final model of adult development is fundamentally unchanged from the one he first proposed in 1978. See Figure 1 for an overview of this model. The structure includes transitions that mark the end of one era and the beginning of the next. Both early adulthood and late adulthood contain novice periods where one seeks a new identity through a particular life structure, and a concluding phase which can be a time of great satisfaction or deep disappointment. Levinson describes the adult life cycle thus:

“1. *Early Adult Transition* (age 17-22) is a cross-era transition in which we terminate childhood and initiate early adulthood. A cross-era transition involves not only a change in life structure, but also a fundamental turning point in the life cycle. We are on the boundary between eras--without a clear idea of what is to come.

2. *Entry Life Structure for Early Adulthood* (age 22-28). The tasks now are to make some key choices (especially regarding love/marriage/family, occupation, separation from family of origin, and lifestyle) and to organize one’s life as a young adult. The first life structure built in an era is necessarily provisional; it is an initial attempt to make a place for oneself in a new world and a new generation.

3. *Age 30 transition* (age 28-33) occurs in mid-era. It provides an opportunity to reappraise the Entry Life Structure, to do some further work on individuation (including undone work of earlier transitions), and to explore new possibilities out of which the next structure can be formed. It is a time of moderate to severe developmental difficulty for most women and men.

4. *Culminating Life Structure for Early Adulthood* (age 33-40). The primary developmental task here is to form a structure within which we can try to establish a more secure place for ourselves in society and to accomplish our youthful dreams and goals. We are moving from “junior” to “senior” membership in the adult world.

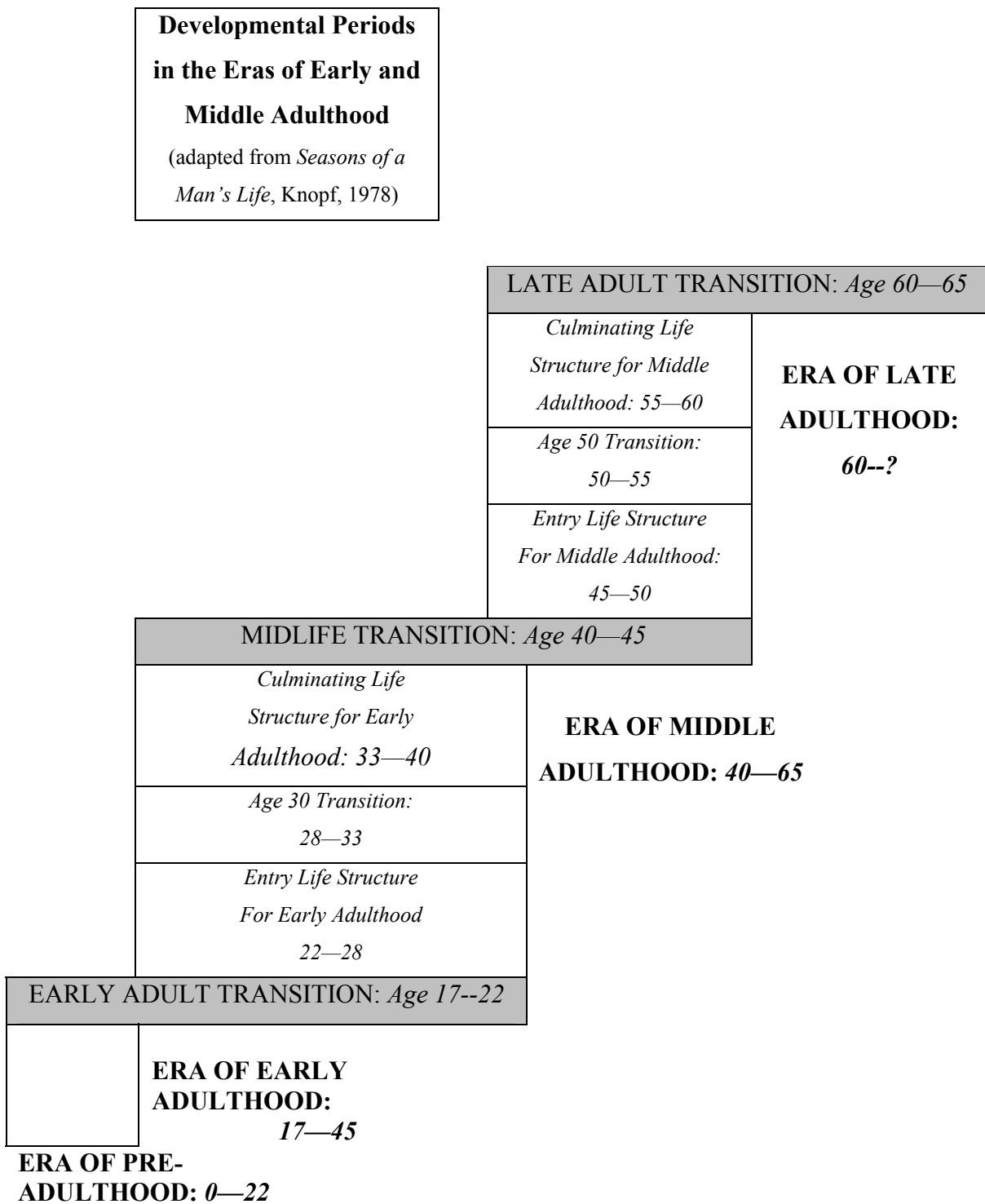
5. *Mid-life Transition* (age 40-45) is a developmental bridge between early and middle adulthood and is part of both eras. We terminate the life structure of the thirties, come to terms with the end of “youth” as it existed in early adulthood, and try to create new way of being young-and-old appropriate to middle adulthood. The work of mid-life individuation is an especially important task of this period; it forms the inner matrix out of which a modified self and life evolve over the rest of this era.

6. *Entry Life Structure for Middle Adulthood* (age 45-50). The primary task of this period is to create an initial structure for the launching of middle adulthood. This structure is often dramatically different from that of the late thirties. Even when it is superficially similar (for example, one is in the same job, marriage, community), there are important differences in the relationships that form the central components of the life structure. We establish an initial place in a new generation and a new season of life.

7. *Age 50 Transition* (age 50-55) is an opportunity to reappraise the Entry Life Structure, to engage in some further exploration of self and world, and to create a basis for the structure to be formed in the ensuing period. It is a mid-era transition, analogous to the Age 30 Transition. Developmental crises are common in this period, especially for persons who have made few significant life changes, or inappropriate changes, in the previous ten to fifteen years.

8. *Culminating Structure for Middle Adulthood* (age 55-60). This structure, like that of the thirties, provides a vehicle for the realization of the era’s major aspirations and goals.

Figure 1



Note. From Levinson, 1996, p. 18.

9. *Late Adult Transition* (age 60-65) concludes middle adulthood and initiates late adulthood. It requires a profound reappraisal of the past and a shift to a new era. We create a basis for building, in the next period, an Entry Life Structure for Late Adulthood” (1996, p. 26).

Women’s Adult Development

Levinson’s model has come under some criticism since it was first proposed in 1976. Several writers have questioned his lack of quantitative evidence (Smart & Peterson, 1994). Perhaps because it was first identified as a model of male adult development, some feminist authors have ignored it. “... for today’s older women, there is no guideline or even relevant lifespan developmental literature ...” (Fodor and Franks, cited by Lippert, 1997, p. 20). Others have judged this model shortsighted (Caffarella & Olson, 1993). However, several researchers have explored Levinson’s premise and have found that it contains valuable insights into women’s career development. In comparing Levinson’s model and Super’s model, Ornstein & Isabella found that “... women’s experiences were more closely aligned with how old they were than with where they were in their career” (1990, p. 16). Popular author Joan Borysenko (1996) has written about women’s life cycles based upon Levinson’s model.

Levinson (1996) has stated that his intention was always to explore gender’s influence in adult development. He began his studies using male subjects since “a strongly male-centered view of adult life has for centuries been prevalent in our scientific and cultural institutions ...” therefore it is impossible not to be “... influenced by concepts, assumptions, and ways of thinking based primarily upon the experience and writing of men” (Levinson, 1996, p. x). Most of the authors cited above agree that there

needs to be more done to expand upon Levinson's findings especially as they relate to women's lives.

Levinson described the particular barriers of female adult development in terms of gender splitting (1996). Gender splitting creates institutional barriers between men and women at both cultural and individual levels and are comprised of four components:

- The splitting of public and domestic spheres into social domains for men and women.
- The Traditional Marriage Enterprise, which creates a power inequity between female homemakers and male providers.
- The division of work into woman's work and men's work.
- The experience each individual has of having one's feminine aspects split from one's masculine aspects.

Levinson identified the influence of gender splitting on women's psyches as a struggle between the internalized Traditional Marriage Enterprise Figure and the Internal Anti-Traditional Figure. This dichotomy affects adult women's development by channeling and/or limiting the evolution of their Dreams. Although many women hope to experience having a family and a career, the struggle between these opposing forces have engaged them "in a struggle to the death" (Levinson, 1996, p. 232). The Traditional Marriage Enterprise is defined as marriage and homemaking; having a job is seen as a practical necessity at best. The husband's *dreams* are supported at the expense of her own aspirations. She avoids confronting the opposing figures by not examining her own unformed *dream*. The Anti-Traditional Figure is created as a way to say what one

doesn't want rather than what one does want. For a woman, this is a first step towards forming a *dream*. Levinson's findings show that those who persist in struggling to define their *dreams* also manage to get further in resolving the opposing internal figures and so lead fuller lives.

Women's Dreams

The *dream* is an energizing vision of oneself that inspires one to take action in the world. Early in one's life, the *dream* is a "vague sense of self-in-world, an imagined possibility of one's adult life that generates excitement and vitality" (Levinson, 1996, p. 238). During the early adult transition, it is the task of the individual to solidify the *dream* and develop a life structure to sustain it. At its best, the *dream* is translated into a set of specific, purposely planned goals. When one reaches a goal, the potential contained in the *dream* is also met. "A life based upon a *dream* has a special, vital quality; any other is at best a compromise and at worst a defeat" (1996, p. 238).

But for many young women, making a *dream* come true is a luxury too expensive to pursue. They may not allow themselves to think about what they really want when they are "totally occupied with survival in a barren environment or with conformity to a life scenario that leaves no room for personal choice ..." (1996, p. 239).

Another very important finding is that well-defined mentoring relationships are key ingredients for developing young women's *dreams*. Also, the quality of the mentoring relationship is all-important. Levinson stated that "... although the mentors helped her in setting occupational goals, they appear not to have helped her in forming a *dream* and in giving their blessing—something much more powerful than support—to the

pursuit of it” (1996, p. 255). Others have also found that mentoring is very important for women in achieving their goals (Sandler, 1995; Bizzari, 1995).

The Existential Foundation of the Dream

The *dream* has been the common thread running throughout the tapestry of Levinson’s years of studying the universal themes of adult development. Although he never mentioned existential psychology, others have found his concepts readily fit within existential themes. In their study of the mental health of men at mid-life, Drebing & Gooden (1991) found that having a viable *dream* added significantly to mental health functioning. Those who did not have a *dream* or who had experienced the failure of attaining a *dream* reported more anxiety and depression. Bauman & Waldo have described the task of developing a *dream* and pursuing it to be the motivating force behind one’s ability to face “the four givens of the human condition” (1998, p. 20). These four tasks are: Meaninglessness vs. Creativity, Isolation vs. Loving, Death vs. Faith and Freedom vs. Commitment. Developing a personal *dream* leads to authenticity and authenticity is essential for good mental health. Pursuing a *dream* and leading an authentic life requires great courage and commitment (Frankl, 1959; Bugental, 1965; Yallom, 1980; Vontress, 1988). The risk of not taking responsibility for one’s life is to become vulnerable to conformity, submission to totalitarianism, thrill seeking, aimlessness, and nihilism (Yallom, 1980). Compulsive frantic activity that consumes one’s energy is yet another way to avoid the challenge.

Existential Challenges of Counseling

Developing a *dream* and leading an authentic life may be particularly important for counselors in their professional lives. Counselors often find themselves in the position to help their clients make discoveries about themselves and to take responsibility for creating meaningful lives. The counseling relationship demands an honest connection between counselor and client. It is vital that the therapeutic relationship be as creative and authentic as possible. “No amount of sophistication of technique, no degree of thoroughness of grounding in theory can substitute for a sound therapeutic relationship” (Bugental, 1965, p. 87).

On a personal level, counseling carries certain risks. Several authors contend that counselors endure a higher risk for “burn-out” (Yiu-Kee & Tang, 1995) than do those in other occupations. “Burn-out” includes high levels of frustration and exhaustion that result from pouring one’s energies into a role that does not offer the expected rewards. Among the stressors counselors face are post-traumatic stress reactions (Kinzie, 1994) and the lack of support or hostility of their supervisors (Davis, Savicki, Cooley & Firth, 1989). Yiu-kee & Tang (1995) conducted research with mental health professionals in which they found that having a purpose in life and the motivation to find meaning had an inverse relationship to burnout.

The increasing numbers of women entering the counseling field bring further challenges to the counseling profession as well as to counselor education and training programs. With the advent of feminist models of counseling such as Gender Aware Therapy (GAT) developed by Good, Gilbert, and Scher (1990) and another by Worell &

Remer (1992), counselor education and training programs are gradually becoming infused with the qualities of mutual respect, cooperation, and interdependence. “Just as it is important to respect a client’s freedom to make informed choices, it is important to respect the rights of students (and faculty members) to select, develop, and support their own theoretical positions” (Hoffman, 1996, p. 110). Still, as exciting as these models are, there seems to be a need for a comprehensive model of counselor development that addresses the challenges of adult development, including that of women and allows for a sensitivity for cultural diversity.

In conclusion, this review has examined the findings of Levinson including his most recent research into the particular barriers women face in meeting existential challenges. The importance of forming a *dream* is directly related to maintaining good mental health. One of the main goals of counselor education is to help the counselor develop authenticity and honesty in counseling relationships.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Subjects

Four female graduate student volunteers were interviewed during the late spring of 2001. These volunteers were actively participating in master's programs at the time that they were interviewed. They represented the School Counseling, K-12 certification program, the Mental Health Counseling program, and the Vocational Rehabilitation program.

Research Sites

The University of Wisconsin-Stout, a mid-sized public university of 7,400 students situated in a semi-rural community of 14,000 is the source for study participants. Of the student population, the number of female graduate students enrolled in four counselor education programs has increased over the years until they now outnumber male students by a wide margin (Appendix A). The interviews were conducted in a private location on campus. It is essential that "systematic inquiry ... occur in a natural setting rather than an artificially constrained one ..." (Marshall & Rossman, 1995, p. 4).

Sampling Procedures

Subjects were chosen from volunteers recruited by their advisor or from those who responded to an appeal for volunteers during a classroom presentation. Since this researcher is employed as a counselor at the University Counseling Center, those who were counselors in training at the Counseling Center during the time of the interviews were eliminated as candidates for this study to avoid dual relationship issues.

General Procedures

Since “the purpose of (this) study was to uncover and describe participant’s perspective on events” (Marshall & Rossman, 1995, p. 81), data was generated by in-depth interviews conducted by the researcher, the subjects’ written responses, and the interviewer’s own reactions to the interview process. Before the interviews were scheduled, the subjects were informed about the purpose of the study and assured that their privacy and anonymity would be protected. By the day of the interview, each participant received a list of interview questions, a consent form to read and sign, a letter of introduction, and instructions for a drawing exercise called a Mind Map (Appendix B). The Mind Map drawing technique was developed by Tony Buzan (1994) as a way to access and organize information quickly through the use of symbols rather than phrases. “It is a powerful graphic technique which provides a universal key to unlocking the potential of the brain” (1994, p. 59). It is generally accepted that drawing is a non-verbal means to express thoughts and concerns that may not be easily articulated. The drawing exercise was included to help the study participants to access at a deeper level how the *dream* functions in their lives. The participants constructed their mind maps after they were interviewed (Appendix C).

At the time of the interview, this author collected the signed consent forms. The interviews were audio taped. The shortest interview took 45 minutes, the longest was an hour and a half to complete. Two of the participants had several days in which to review the information and two did not. The participants’ identities were disguised by changing their names and certain other specific information that might identify them. All subjects

were informed that they would receive a copy of the finished paper. Any field notes written during the interviews were saved (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Information collected included observations. According to Patton (1990), field notes are descriptive. They contain what subjects say and include their feelings, reasons, insights and interpretations. Any interviewer interpretations and insights are included but marked as such to separate this information from what is observed. Rubin & Rubin (1995) insist that field notes contain a self-portrait providing clues about material that might be missing, where bias might have entered, and to see where the interviewer may have been more or less accurate or rich in details. Information from the taped interviews were transcribed by hand and then typed up. Before beginning the analysis, all the information gathered was carefully read. The participants were mailed copies of the initial findings and asked to write back concerning the accuracy and validity of the findings.

Analysis of the Data

Qualitative research is preferred when one wants to uncover the unexpected (Marshall & Rossman, 1995) and to allow the subjects to speak in their own words about their own experiences. The main purpose of qualitative interviewing is to understand the meaning that individuals place upon the themes of their lives (Kvale, 1996). Qualitative data needs to delve deep. "Coding and standardizing may destroy data by imposing one's own world view onto the data" (Marshall & Rossman, 1995, p. 45). Therefore, this researcher coded the data and generated categories using the first interview as a prototype. The data from the first interview was analyzed line-by-line and then organized to uncover categories. Each major idea generated from the field notes, interviews and

written responses were placed on separate note cards. The categories that were uncovered included “themes, concepts, processes, examples, and stories while keeping in mind the relationships between the categories” (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 249). These categories and concepts were named and organized using code notes. This process is referred to as “open coding” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 61). Coding generates concepts leading to classification. The outline thus developed was used in analyzing the data gathered from the rest of the study participants to uncover themes.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Introduction

In gathering and classifying the information for this study, themes, commonalities, and categories gradually emerged. All of the participants were in the midst of writing thesis papers. They all shared a Northern European cultural heritage. Nicole and Dawn were in their mid-twenties, Levinson's *Entry Life Structure for Early Adulthood*. Cass and April were in their early forties, Levinson's *Midlife Transition*. Nicole and Dawn did not have much time to prepare for the interview. Cass and April had at least a few days to examine the interview questions. No two individuals shared the same marital status. Cass was divorced with no children. April had been married for 20 years and has two children. Nicole was single but soon to be married. Dawn was a single parent with one young child. Both Nicole and Dawn were in the School Guidance and Counseling graduate program. Cass was in the Vocational Rehabilitation, Special Education program. April was in the Mental Health Guidance and Counseling program. A marriage and family graduate counseling program was not represented.

During the first interview, it became apparent that a question asking for a self-description needed to be added. A later line-by-line analysis of the first interview transcript revealed themes and categories. These themes and categories were then matched to the interview questions to find logical intersections. From this analysis the central theme of *dreams* and goals was revealed. In addition, the following categories were uncovered: self-concept, juggling multiple roles, mentors and others, turning points and wake-up calls, and graduate counseling programs' impact on the *dream*.

FindingsSelf Concept

Question #1 (Appendix B) was added so that demographic data could be gathered and also to gain an idea of how the participants saw themselves. All except one of the women readily identified themselves in terms of age and marital status. Although most of the woman described themselves in terms of qualities and characteristics, one identified herself in terms of commitments and responsibilities. The older women described qualities that they believed made them good counselors.

Cass.

“I like a lot of different kinds of things. I never could focus on one thing! I like to do different things. And I’ve always been that way.... That’s why I was a good social worker.... I could always see this big picture. I can always see both sides of the story.”

April.

“... I have always worked full time. I’m married. I have two children, ages ten and almost twelve, two dogs, a husband, car payments. You know, I’m pretty average as far as a life goes. Sometimes, I think I’m not average because I’m still married (laugh) everyone seems to be getting divorced.... I turned forty this last birthday.... I’m real practical. But, I’m also open-minded enough to see that what might work for me, might not work for other people. I have an interesting knack of being creative... So, I think that’s one of the reasons I got into mental health.... I can use my creativity. I can use my intuition. I can use those things scientists can’t prove. But, yet at the same time... It needs to make some kind of sense to

me, too.”

Nicole.

“I’m twenty-three years old.... I’m currently in the Master’s program for School Guidance and Counseling. I’ve just finished all my courses. Now, I have to finish the thesis, which I’m almost done with. And then I have my practicum and internship, which I will be doing back home. I have a bachelor’s in Psychology, and I got that from Stout. And I also went... for the first two years for physical therapy—It really changed.”

Dawn.

“The way that I describe myself is: Determined and self-motivated.... I don’t take a lot of things for granted.... I’m very realistic... I know that not everything is the way that it seems. I’m not very naïve to many things.... I went to Catholic schools all the way through. I graduated from Stout in ’99 with my bachelor’s in Psychology.... I have a daughter who’s three and a half. I’m a single parent. So, that’s basically it.”

Dreams and Goals

Information compiled into the *dreams* and goals category was gathered from questions #2, #6, #7, and #11 (Appendix B). Several of the participants initially explored definitions of *dreams* and goals. Three of the participant described having a childhood *dream* of helping people in some way. The fourth also expressed a desire to help others. All described an initial period of trial and error when it came to finding an undergraduate program of study. This initial period of finding one’s place fits Levinson’s description of

the *Early Adult Transition*. One of the participants described the need to reevaluation her *dream*. This experience fits Levinson's description of the *Mid-life Transition*. Two of the participants described their *dreams* as the desire to get married and have a family. They said that this had been a goal from an early age. Descriptions of the mind maps (Appendix C) that were completed by three of the participants are also included. These drawings show a common emphasis upon themes such as spirit, creativity, relationships to self and others.

Cass.

".... It's sort of a combination of both a *dream* and a goal. It's my *goal* to get the degree. It's always been my *dream* to work in the field so it's kind of a combination. I've always felt that way. Ever since I can remember. But I didn't realize there was this degree in Rehab. Counseling.... I'd applied at Milwaukee. I would have gone. I liked social work.... but that was like leaving a part of myself behind.

... when I first started out in college, I wanted to be a Special Ed. teacher.... But, since I didn't want to be a teacher, I didn't do so well.... so I changed my major to Home Ec. really fast so I could graduate and get a degree!

... I really don't feel like I gave up Special Ed. I really feel that I'm doing what I want. I knew ever since I got my first bachelors degree that I would go on to get a masters degree.... And, I knew it was going to be...some kind of counseling....

I got real interested in crisis counseling when I was a Red Cross volunteer. I'd like to go back and do some more of that; get more involved...or maybe get more

courses in mental health counseling.... one thing I would really like to do is to go back to get more art classes. Do drawing and painting. Maybe really learn how to play the piano (laugh). It's going to take a lot of money to do that..."

The mind map that Cass completed (Appendix C) was done in pen on notebook paper. Her main theme for her *dream* she titled *degree in Voc Reh (special Ed)*. Many of the secondary themes involve relationships with particular individuals, God, parents, co-workers, self, and children. The importance of relationships to her life's *dream* is revealed by the drawing exercise.

April.

"Up to this point—up to turning forty—I had a plan. And now I'm forty and I don't have a plan. I'm sick and tired of being seen as a CD counselor. It's like a bad word.... I found out that I'm a specialized mental health counselor. ...twenty years ago, you needed a high school diploma and a year of training at some hospital... And, it's changed a lot. All I know is that I want to finish my master's degree. And the reasons for doing it now are very different than the reasons for doing it when I was thirty. It's all monetary and status [now].

When I first went to college, I wanted to be a physical therapist.... there were a lot of women in the field who made a decent dollar. And that was something...that was drilled into my head from all sides of my family... And once I got to school, I realized... my chemistry was really weak. So, I knew I'd have a horrible time in Organic Chemistry.... And then I had Physics and, you, know, I can't do this! So, I went home and gave my dad the bad news. And he

said, 'What are you going to do, then?' And I said, 'Well, I like my psychology classes.' 'You can't make a living in psychology.' So, I went into psychology (laugh)—absolutely useless degree. You can't *do* anything with it. I finished it anyway....

...an applied psych. program...opened doors for me... That's where I got into the whole CD thing. I got an internship opportunity and it just clicked. ...This is where the whole idea of Guidance and Counseling was coming into its infancy thing.... a lot of the people that had Ph. D's didn't want to see people on a regular basis or do the therapy aspect of it. So it fit. It was really cool. It's like I was born at the right time or something.

If I get the master's degree done, I'll be happy.... Ideally, I'd like to be setting my own schedule and taking about a month of vacation a year and doing my painting.... I do walls, design stuff.... I know I won't make a whole lot of money at it.... I'm looking forward to spending more time with my husband.... The bicycling and the hiking and things like that.... I want to be active. I want people to say, 'Gee, you're fifty?' That's what I want people to say.

[The reason for] getting into mental health when I was in my twenties was that I wanted to help people. But here I am...focusing on business because if I don't focus on business, we can't be open long enough to help anyone.

That whole administrative thing; it just—it's looming in front of me and I'm going to have to make a decision. There are aspects of it I like a lot and there's aspects that I don't like. Probably the biggest one is the idea that I'm counseling

employees that counsel other people. I have a low tolerance for other professionals who are really messed up.... And it goes into...the whole legal aspect. How do you get rid of somebody that you know is...really unhealthy? So, the whole business aspect of it—how do you do that? I’m still having too much fun with the therapy...”

April’s mind map (Appendix C) was done following revised instructions and using a mind map pattern that I developed to make the drawing process easier. April’s central theme was titled “Happiness” and included the symbol of the sun. She did not seem to use color to organize themes. It does convey the vitality of various broad concepts such as family, creativity, work, and spirituality. April’s mind map revealed that artistic and spiritual values, among others, are important elements in her life. She included a value for justice.

Nicole.

“Well, currently I’m working on completing my thesis. I already reached the goal of finishing the coursework and doing my master’s... I will be getting married January 12th.... when I was little it was always a goal of mine to be married and have a family. So, those are my two goals that I’d like to complete.

... I always had a love for children. ... When I was in high school, my *dream*...was to be a physical therapist. But I was told, ‘It’s a hard program, you’re not going to be able to do it.’... when I was in physical therapy, I had to study, you know?... And that psych. course—I took it and I just loved going to class.... Things came easy.”

Dawn.

“Well, my goal is to finish my program... Getting my thesis done is some of what’s left. But as far as *dreams* go, I don’t have a lot of *dreams*. I look at *dreams* as something you can’t really reach. The difference between a goal and a *dream* is setting a date... my goal...is to go on for a few years, get my administrative degree, and eventually get my doctorate—be a college professor. I want to do a lot of traveling, a lot of independent work. My big goal would be to take every year as it comes and basically to keep improving myself.... I want to be able to portray that when I’m counseling little kids or to high school kids—that it’s important...to have enough confidence to become a better person.... From the time I was little I always wanted to be a lawyer. Maybe I’ll go to school to be a lawyer and be a lawyer for schools, something like that. Or a lawyer for children that come from abusive backgrounds....

I would like to eventually go on and get my doctorate and teach in a college setting somewhere. I don’t care where.... one of my very, very long-term goals is to teach overseas.... depending upon if I get married or have more children—until they are gone to college or doing whatever they do. And then I can just travel...”

Dawn created her mind map (Appendix C) using a pattern that I had given her.

She used pen with blue ink throughout. Her central theme she titled, “Finding True Love.” Main concepts include spirit, education, her daughter, friendship, music, and personal growth.

Juggling Multiple Roles

The participants described conflicts and strategies as they responded to questions #3, #4, and #9 (Appendix B). Levinson described women as having to struggle to resolve the splitting of gender roles into separate spheres of marriage/family and career. This struggle is thought to take so much energy that there is not much left for pursuing one's personal *dream*. One woman voiced great concern over this conflict as she was actively negotiating with her partner concerning this important challenge in her life. Most of the women spoke of the conflict as being one of timing. All expressed the belief that they should be able to combine having a career with being married and having a family.

Cass.

"... My father always encouraged me to further my education as much as I can... I always felt like I could have them both. But, It didn't work out that way.... my [painful experience with] marriage was what pushed me into going to college... I would have been content to be a wife and have children. But, it didn't work out that way. I would have been like my mother. I wouldn't have worked. She had a career. And, then she got married and had a family. She didn't feel like she had to choose. She thought she could do both because her mother did both.... To me, it wasn't a big deal. I always thought I could have both. I don't have a husband. I don't have a boy friend.... At this time in my life, even if I did have a boy friend I wouldn't have much to give him. I've put that on the back burner right now."

April.

“It was always part of the plan. Ever since I was little, I knew I’m going to get married. I want to get married and I want to have children.... You know, I’m very fortunate, now that I look back on it. I’m fortunate that it turned out this way. But, I knew I wanted to be married by the time I was twenty-five. I knew I wanted to be done having children by the time I was thirty.... So, it worked out fairly well... My mother always worked full time. Or, at least I always remember her working full time.... Her mother was one of the World War II ladies that went to the bomb factory.... My other grandma worked. The women in my life worked.... So, it just seemed like a real natural thing. *They* all managed to balance work and home and do an okay job of it. So, yeah, I was taught. I just always knew I was going to work outside the home. It’s one of the things I discussed *lots* with my husband. His mom worked. And he wanted me to work.... The benefits that I found for my kids is that, at their ages, they’re pretty independent....

...I started graduate school at twenty-five. And the plan was to finish graduate school and start having children. That was the plan. And, in the process of getting my Plan B done, I got pregnant. And things started unraveling. I thought I could get this done. I was working on my Plan B, work full time, and be a new mom. And something had to give.... I had completed enough education and I had enough practical hours to get certified in AODA. So, I became licensed at that point. I needed the license worse than I needed the master’s degree... So, I let it

go.... I wasn't really giving it up.

...my husband was transferred... Since he makes more money, I'm definitely going to follow him. And so I quit my job that I'd had for six years... Part of it was by choice. And during those eighteen months, I tried a real creative kind of thing.... my own business.... I just loved it.... my daughter had just started kindergarten. So we spent a lot of time together. It was a nice period... The eighteen months probably set us back... Our income was cut back by a third..."

The little decisions, I've learned to weigh out because ...the best thing to do sometimes is nothing. And then actually it can work itself out. Having faith in the natural course of events and understanding that there are many things I have no control over. And if I start messing with them I'll make it worse. ...you're gonna have to march to your own drummer—you grow from it. You become an interesting person (laugh)."

Nicole.

"...getting married. I mean, it's one of the happiest times and I love him to death. But, it's a challenge because the internship, the practicum... We've been in a long-distance relationship for five years. So, it's very challenging... I've got to get good grades. I've got to see him. I've got to make his football games. ...

He's in [] State.... He graduates this December and so do I. We'll be married January... I have my internship lined up and it's in January 2002-2003, which is very difficult to get in the middle of the school year.... That was something I just had to take, which is very frustrating because he doesn't know where he's going

to be. So, I'm torn. Okay, do I take this internship not knowing if I'll be with him? Or do I not take it and jeopardize (not) having an internship? Which would be difficult to do. How I resolved it was, I'm important. The internship, that comes first. And the year of marriage apart will be difficult. But, we're going to have to deal with it. And, I also wanted kids right away as soon as we got married. Well, we had to put that off a year because of the internship. And we don't know what we're going to be doing, if we're going to be living together. So our first year is very frustrating. But, I'm going my way. And hopefully, he will find a job in the area where I'm going to be.... I want to have children when we are married. I want to have them when I'm young. I have to put that on hold. So I'm not giving up on that. And, the same with, maybe I won't be able to live with [] my first year of marriage... Yeah. It's a *dream*. But, it's just being put on hold.

To reach the goal I've always had, to get my master's degree [may mean that] I have to put marriage on the back burner for the first year.... That...is very hard because I'm very family-oriented.... But, he knows what's best for me... .. I wanted to get my master's in education also. So I could either teach or do whatever.... and a Ph. D—I don't think I need that 'cause that's pretty much to teach at the college level. And that's not what I want to do. If I do go further, it will probably be getting another master's."

Dawn.

"Well, the fact that I have a three and a half year old daughter—I guess I kind of

have a little bit of both. I do not have a strong desire at all to be married. I can take care of myself and her. I'm very happy right now doing what I'm doing. And if I happen to meet somebody—that's great. And if I don't, that's great too. I want to pursue my career. And I don't want anything to get in the way of that.... right now I've got pretty lofty goals for myself... I don't ever want to have to try to make a choice between, am I going to get married or am I ...going to go to school? I think they should go together.

... I think... at the time, I looked at it that I had to give up a lot when I had my daughter.... I was giving up...just a lot of freedom to go and do whatever I wanted.... now I look back and wish I wouldn't have thought that way.... I've gained so much more from her.... I had my fun the first three years.... So, I don't think that I've given up anything."

Mentors and Others

The participants explored this theme as they responded to question #5 (Appendix B). They identified mentors as acting as guides, as role models, and as permission-givers. One individual described an anti-mentor phenomenon that she used to spur herself on to achieve her goals.

Cass

"Well, when I first started out in college, ... I didn't do so well. And I remember my department head who has now passed on.... said, 'you may not know it now, but there is a way. And you're going to get into this field and you're really going

to succeed.’ He really thought I had a lot of good qualities and abilities of making good in this field.

I guess another person who really encourages me is my department head.... the whole department is really great because they really help you in any way they can. You know, I have not seen that in other master’s programs. It’s usually sink or swim.... I’ve been on two different campuses.... and this is the first time I’ve seen a lot of encouragement... I think that they really... encourage the students to succeed.... the whole department is this way...”

April.

“There are a lot of strong women in my family—a lot of strong women. The women on my mom’s side of the family were farming wives... my great-aunt... taught for sixty years.... my mother and her sister both graduated from high school. I was the first female to graduate from college, on both sides of the family. My dad’s...mother was a really strong woman. Her mother, my great-grandmother, went through huge life style changes.... She just had a real solid grounding about her. She just, you know, handled things. Those were probably the most influential—as far as the *dreams* went.

I had a history professor that instilled in me some really cool things...as far as that whole American Dream thing. We came to America. The hope was that our children would have it better. And he said, ‘that’s a nice myth. Because, you’re born into a class and you stay in that class.’ ... It doesn’t matter how much money you make. The only way you can find the key to yourself, to rise above it,

is education....

And, my mother's thing was, you don't *ever* become dependent on a guy even if you're married to him.... because, who knows. He could get hit by a truck and then where are you? So, her big thing was you get an education and prove you can support yourself in case something horrible happens..."

Nicole.

"...definitely my parents. When I was in high school, my *dream*...was to be a physical therapist. But I was told, 'it's a hard program, you're not going to be able to do it.' They were by my side through it all. And then... I just fell in love with psychology. So, I transferred and everything. No matter what, they were always there for me. Always helping me out. You know, being away from home—'Oh I need to see you.' And they'd come up. And my guidance counselor—I job shadowed him about two years ago.... So—definitely my parents and my high school guidance counselor.

With a psych. degree—you know, with a bachelor's, you can't do much with it. And I knew I wanted to pursue college and get a master's and stuff. And, I didn't know whether it was going to be school psychology or mental health. And after job shadowing him, I knew which way to go.... He's the one pulling all the strings [for the internship] for me."

Dawn.

"... I was in a class and they asked who influenced us and everybody was saying, you know, parents and...teachers. And they were pretty much all positive. And I

kind of thought to myself, I've had so many negative influences...in my life.

Where people didn't really believe in me or believe that I could do it—that that motivated me positively. Like, I could prove them wrong....there are certain teachers who thought that I'd—never thought I would be graduating with my master's degree.

... I've had a very few professors here at Stout that have made me want to be a better person. Not necessarily better educationally—because I've never been a *great* student.... Dr. Mary Flynn.... I don't know what it is about her, but...it wasn't what page she made me read. It wasn't what papers she made me write. It was the way that she kinda made me think. And she made me believe and made me look at things.... she was a single parent when she went through college and graduate school and doctorate and all of that. And I kinda look at that as, if she could do that back then, there's no reason that I can't do it now.... I've had the opportunity to talk with her. I mean we've talked....

... Ed Biggerstaff. He's been the same way to me ever since I met him. I met him my junior year of college, I think. He's just real inspirational, very positive. He's just one of those people I like to be around. He kinda makes you have a better day. He's genuinely interested in how you're doing. When he says, 'How are you doing?' He means it. But you know, I think back to people who have actually inspired me in my life. And those are the people—my mom and dad, too. But they're family. I look at it like they kinda have to do that."

Turning Points and Wake-up Calls

This set of information was brought forth during responses to questions # 5 and #6 (Appendix B). Described as sudden, unplanned, impulsive, or unexpected, these were key events that the participants believed changed their lives in profound ways.

Cass.

“... I really have a belief that God has a plan for everyone’s life. And I really feel that God is the one who gave me this dream. ... It was very vivid. And this was right after my marriage went south.... I had this dream that my life was a house and the house was being built. It already had its foundation.... it was halfway done. And they were putting precious stones around the windows. It was like God told me, ‘this is your life. And, your life is building this house. And when the house gets done, and everything gets inlaid in the house, you're going to be following your dream.’ And, it's like, every time I do something, there's another stone in my house. There's another wall put up.... And it came at a point in my life that was so terrible and so bad.... It’s been years since I dreamed this dream. But it still gets to me because it was such a powerful vision of hope.”

April.

“So, I lost my job.... I was really, really—I was stuck. So...the mental health stuff wasn’t helping me anymore—I went into the area of spiritual, well, the mystical aspect.... I was on the Internet one night and this thing came up, Your Tarot Reading. And honestly, it helped.... It nailed down specifics of what I needed to focus on. It gave me some hope.... it just seemed to help center me.

That was when that whole creative thing comes into play.... I felt better. I could go back out there. I could face what I had to face.”

Nicole.

“... I was...working with disadvantaged kids. And, all of a sudden, you know, one day it just hit me. Okay, I love psychology. I love being with these kids, helping these kids.... How can I help these kids? So, things really took a turn.... I’m very thankful I got that job. Because I don’t know if I would have been here [at UW-Stout] today...”

Dawn.

“When I got pregnant with my daughter—you find out fast who your friends are, very fast. And, in a way, it’s unfortunate. But, I wouldn’t be here if it wasn’t for her. Like, she’s been a strong influence to kind of get myself together and get going... if it wasn’t for her... I probably wouldn’t have looked at my life the way I do now. I think I took a lot of things for granted.... And now I don’t... I’m more realistic—I know how hard it is for a lot of people. And, I know that nothing comes easy. ... a lot of my friends don’t have children. And I have to work two, three times harder than they do. And, they don’t have master’s degrees.... I’m doing what I want to do and know that I can help other people. And I know that’s because of her.”

Impact of Counselor Education and Training

This theme was developed from information gathered from questions #8 and #10 (Appendix B). Although the participants all described situations where their programs of

study created extra stress in their lives, they all saw this as a temporary situation. All participants were looking forward to reaping the benefits of their hard work. They described finishing their master's programs as allowing them more power in the workplace, more control of their personal lives, more status, and greater confidence in their ability to help others.

Cass.

“When I'm stuck, I either have to force myself to keep doing it, which I've had to do recently, or I take a nap and I ignore everything (laugh). Which is not good because I have a lot to do. But what I've been doing most of the day is just sit down and bull through it.... I have to sit down and force myself to write on my calendar—this is due, or I won't get it done.... If I don't do that, I get behind, like I almost did on my thesis. I want to get my thesis done in a timely manner.... The internship will be more like going to work.... The thesis is the bigger challenge.... I just have to find time to sit down and write....

... I always knew I would be in this field some way, some how. And, the program validated that...I wasn't up the river somewhere with this disability thing. I don't think that *I'll* be different. I think that what's going to be different is, I'm going to be able to do all the things I always said that I could do. My *life* is going to be different. I'm going to have that piece of paper, you know. And, I always knew I could do something like that. I just never had that validation. ... I think finally I'm going to be able to say that I have the education behind what I'm doing. When I was...coming up with ideas for the clients I was working with...

they [superiors] would say, ‘You don’t have the degree.’ And I would say, ‘what does that have to do with it? I know what they need. I see what they need. This is what they need.’ And, as a Rehab. Counselor, I won’t have anyone telling me anymore. I’ll be able to say, ‘I know what my client needs and I’m going to go get it for them.’”

April.

“Over the next year, I have to finish these three courses and do my Plan B, and work full time and take care of my family. That’s my biggest challenge right now.... to say, this is what’s important to me. And I’ve had several long talks with my family as far as, ‘yes, I’m putting you on hold and you’ll have to enter adolescence with me watching...’ And at work it’s like saying no to a lot of extra projects.

When I entered graduate school, I did it because I had been working in the field for about two years. I began to realize how much I didn’t understand about theory and about practical counseling. ... So coming into the graduate school up here I honed the counseling skills and learned more about myself than I ever wanted to know (laugh). And I walked out of here really confident as far as what I could do....

I’m sick and tired of having people tell me, ‘Well, you can’t do that’ or ‘You don’t have the credentials to do that’ or, you know, ‘that’s out of your field.’ And this is my way around it (laugh). ...They really don’t care how long I’ve been doing this. They want this piece of paper—this so important piece of paper...”

Nicole.

“I’m a substitute teacher this past semester. You know, my practicum.... everything hitting me. And I was taking eighteen credits. So, the thesis was just overwhelming. So—I took a week off of student teaching, you know, and just hit it hard. When I’m stuck I become more determined. And, I put time away for myself. Like, okay, if I do my first chapter, however rough, then I’ll go do whatever.... I need some time to rejuvenate so I can hit it strong again. I am very athletic-oriented.

When I was in high school, I struggled to get a 3.0. Then I graduated from undergrad. And I was, like, at a 3.4. And grad. school—it’s like a 3.8 or something. So knowing nothing can stop me. I’m very determined. Doing the thesis, I know I can get it done. And, I know I’ll do a good job. I can do whatever you put in front of me. How did graduate school change me? ...I’m definitely more determined, more self-confident.”

Dawn.

“Sometimes I feel like there just isn’t enough time to do anything just because I...commute. And then I have my daughter. And then doing my practicum, working on my thesis. And then having to work another job, you know, because I waitress, too. I’m very, very busy. So—The thing I love to do is, I love to work out.... I...let it all out, and then kinda regroup. So when I feel stuck I go to the gym or take a long walk or just take some time for myself. ‘Cause that’s

something I never did for myself before. I was too busy doing thing and not really living and enjoying all of it.

I think I'll be a lot more at ease, a lot more relaxed. And enjoy the little things more. Like, just enjoying being done at work at four and picking up my daughter and going home. And not going from here to here to here to here and getting home at 9:30 and making myself dinner finally. Or, you know, not wanting to read her the book when she goes to bed because I'm so tired.... I'll get home at 4:00 and that will pretty much be the end of the day.

... I didn't really have *dreams* or goals.... I just kinda fell into this big mold. Oh, I'll just graduate—get a job, and whatever. Maybe get married. And now...I don't want to do that. I don't want to have society control what I do.

...I've met people here who made me want to be better. ... I have a very good friend and he's been one of my best friends for a long time now. I've just met a lot of good people since I've had my daughter.

...once I have my degree, I know that I'll always have my education to fall back on.... There's a lot of single parents who don't. So, no matter what happens to me in my life, I know that I will always have this.”

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS

This study has investigated the concept of the *dream* as it impacts four women graduate students in counseling education programs. During the course of the interview process, all four participants were able to identify some form of the *dream* operating in their lives. Analysis of the information revealed *dreams*, plans, and goals with humanitarian themes. Two of the women identified an additional justice theme either during the interview or in the mind map exercise. Three of the participants would graduate within the next semester. All said that they had gained self-confidence and determination as a result of their experiences as graduate counseling students. Mentoring relationships, serendipitous events, and the skillful juggling of multiple roles were revealed as key ingredients in successfully pursuing their *dreams*.

Discussion

All of the participants expressed the strong belief that they should be able to have a career, be married, and have a family at the same time. The two participants aged forty or older had recently started reevaluating their *dreams*, plans, or goals. The older women spoke of the frustration of needing to integrate their own personal know-how with current academic and scientific standards. The younger women were focused on clarifying their dreams in terms of their careers. The younger women described their educational experiences as opportunities to demonstrate their ability to work hard to complete any task set before them.

Upon graduation, each interviewee looked forward to having enough time, enough power, enough prestige, or enough social status to advocate for herself, her family, and clients. One could argue that a woman who chooses a career in a helping profession is trying to resolve the conflict between the internalized *traditional figure* and the *internalized anti-traditional figure*. If women are indeed caught up in a struggle between conformity and rebellion, then there is little hope that they will have enough energy left to follow a personal *dream*. But this study's participants experienced serendipitous events that do not lend themselves to descriptions of conformity, but seem more like course corrections made by an unseen hand. The force of these women's *dreams* percolate through every obstacle and eventually bubble to the surface, or precipitate from the heavens, depending upon your point of view.

They spoke of timing. Not just weekly planner timing but also timing that involves decades. Some role, relationship, or favorite activity might need to be placed on hold but it would never be totally cast away. They discussed the challenges of timing the way that an expert juggler might discuss strategies to keep more balls aloft. In juggling all of these roles and tasks, they were proving to themselves that they had the stamina to endure one more ball in the air (graduate studies). It was this self-discovery that seemed to give meaning to their struggles.

Still, there are risks involved in juggling. Several described a "hitting the wall" kind of experience where they could no longer juggle so many tasks and obligations at the pace they had set for themselves. Only when they brought the focus back to their own basic needs were they able to pick up the pieces and move on. In her discussion of

intimacy vs. isolation, Joan Borysenko (1996) states, "... The establishment of intimate relationships is a major focus of girls' development beginning in infancy. Boys who have been busy learning autonomy and separation up to this point must now learn the lessons of gaining affection and interdependence on which true intimacy is based, while girls must grapple with the developmental crisis ... [of] learning to care for [themselves] as much as [they] care for others" (p. 73). During times of increasing levels of stress, and at times when they take on additional roles or obligations, women run the risk of forgetting their own basic needs. It is at those times that women's energy may become diverted into acts of rebellion or conformity.

One of the women recalled participating in a class where the instructor asked the students to speak about those who had mentored them. She realized for the first time that she hadn't had anyone do that for her until she became a college student. Several of the study participants recalled interactions, however brief, with those who encouraged them to pursue their *dreams* and goals. These mentors were described as showing a concern for their students' welfare beyond academic performance. It is not hard to imagine that their interactions with mentors will be what some remember long after the caps and gowns are folded up and packed away.

Women currently make up the majority of counseling students in graduate programs at UW-Stout. By the time they enter their graduate programs, these women have endured long-standing social pressures to fragment themselves and to make impossible choices among the parts. For women, caring about themselves as much as they care about others is an important developmental task. If Levinson (1996) and

Boryshenko (1996) are correct, it cannot be assumed that women graduate students have met this challenge just because they are meeting their programs' short-term course requirements. Women are by nature relational. Probably many women have learned to minimally maintain relationships while looking forward to a time when they can slow the pace down and enjoy deeper, more meaningful interactions. But women run the risk of neglecting their relationship with their own bodies, minds, and spirits for the sake of their obligations. Boryshenko (1996) states that "The combination of strong social support, plus an optimistic attitude ..." (p. 226) creates resiliency to stress. Optimism implies passion and meaning. Without social support, a woman who aspires to a counseling career may not learn to access the energizing force of the *dream* and its ability to give her academic achievements meaning. She may not have the resiliency to successfully meet the requirements of her graduate degree program. Instead, she may run the risk of developing stress-related illnesses, injuries, and burnout.

Recommendations

Women counselors must take their developmental challenges seriously and commit themselves to caring for self just as they would ask this of their clients. It is important that they develop wellness and holistic health strategies so that they can be authentic, professional counselors over their counseling careers. Self-care can be categorized into six domains: emotional, physical, spiritual, cognitive, vocational, and social (O'Halloran & Linton, 2000). Just as they would ask a client to examine these areas in their lives, it would be wise for women counselors to partake in a deep examination of these domains in their own lives at least once during their time as

counselors in training. In addition, this process must be allowed the time to be witnessed and honored by others who also value wellness. Extending a network of social support, seeking mentors who understand this need and fostering friendships can ensure against the pitfall of meeting one's intimacy needs through counseling relationships. Committing to a personal weekend retreat away from the arenas of their obligations would be of greatest benefit to female counselors in training.

Because women graduate students must hoard their time and energy, and because their developmental challenge is in focusing on self-care, it is not at all surprising that these women might resist taking the time to examine their *dreams* and goals and for developing and maintaining preventative self-care strategies. They must have a practical incentive for doing so. Counselor educators are in the position to send a strong message that they value the total personhood of each student. Students might be given college credit for developing their own long-term self-care regimens that honor the body/mind connection. Cooperative efforts with the staff of the University Recreation Center could be implemented to serve as one resource.

Several of the women in this study mentioned valuable relationships with mentors. But, these mentoring events were by necessity all too brief. As Levinson states, "A full, complex, mentorship relationship supports the evolution of the dream" (1996, p. 239). Those in a position to mentor women graduate students are possibly the first to speak directly to the essential quality of their women students' *dreams*. Counseling faculty and academic staff members, if allowed to make this a priority, are in an excellent position to develop mentoring strategies which can help their students mend whatever

damage the gender split has created within themselves. Those who mentor to female counseling students are advised to make themselves aware of the developmental tasks that their students face. They might conduct entrance and exit interviews with their mentees incorporating some of the interview questions or the mind mapping technique used in this study.

Flow experiences, intuition, transpersonal events, and creative processes are real human experiences that impact many students' lives. If students are to develop their full potential as counselors, counseling programs cannot afford to ignore these aspects of life. Boryshenko touches on this realm of women's experience when she states, "Our brains and hormones work in synchrony to make us more available to the wisdom that arises from interdependent perception ... we can make ourselves available to information coming in through many sensory channels—the 'sixth sense' included" (1996, p. 58). Two of the study participants described obvious transpersonal processes that enabled them to reconnect with their *dreams* during especially difficult periods in their lives. Another woman experienced a sudden intuitive awareness of her *dream* track while immersed in the act of helping children. Another became the mother of an unexpected child and in doing this, found the inspiration of her life.

Counseling educators need to recognize, foster, and work with the full spectrum of human experience. Coursework in transpersonal psychology should again be offered at UW-stout and this time be actively promoted. Workshops on creativity and intuition as counseling tools should be integrated into graduate coursework (Faiver, McNally, Nims, 2000). The existing course offered by UW-Stout's Psychology department, Right

Brian, could be expanded and adjusted to meeting the needs of graduate counseling trainees. The existing course offered by UW-Stout's Human Development and Family Studies program, Spirituality Across the Lifespan, could be expanded from a one credit to a two or three credit course.

Conclusion

The concept of the *dream* is not easily dissected into component parts. Possibly, it will defy a final definition. Because, while the *dream* may operate within a time-bound developmental model, the energy of the *dream* can appear unannounced, making course corrections, fine-tuning awareness in the blink of an eye, or reenergizing a life when all seems lost. Whether or not the *dream* functions this way for a majority of women is not known. It is certainly a phenomenon worthy of further study.

This study is qualitative in nature. It is a form of enquiry in the spirit of taking an educated leap in the dark in order to see where one lands. A logical next step is to methodically explore where the leap has taken us. Quantitative methods could be used in conjunction with qualitative ones. Items from the interview questionnaire and the mind mapping exercise could be developed as part of entrance and exit interviews of students in counseling programs. Survey instruments could be developed to gather data from a larger sample. From this study it can be concluded that the concept of the *dream* is a rich and fertile land.

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APPENDIX A

Table 1

Male and Female Graduates of UW-Stout's Guidance and Counseling Masters Program

<u>Decade</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>% Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>% Female</u>	<u>Total</u>
1960's	118	76.63	36	23.37	154
1970's	242	63.03	142	36.97	384
1980's	142	37.17	240	62.83	382
1990's	173	29.03	423	70.97	596

Note. Compiled from data from the Alumni Records Office, University of Wisconsin-Stout.

APPENDIX B

Consent Form

This study examines the Dreams of female graduate students enrolled in two counseling programs at UW-Stout. A Dream can be defined as the central image that a person holds that best describes what they want to do or to be in their life times. *The goals of this study are: 1. Learn about female students' Dreams. 2. Examine to what extent their Dreams are being impacted by their programs of study 3. To inform those who develop and evaluate graduate counselor education programs.* Before being interviewed, please read and sign this consent form, showing that you understand the potential risks and benefits of participation, and that you understand your rights as a participant. If you have any questions, please contact Mary Jackelen-Sterner, at the University Counseling Center, 410 Bowman Hall, UW-Stout.

RISKS

There is little or no risk to you in participating in this study. Your responses are completely confidential.

BENEFITS

Although the results of this study may be of benefit to others in the future, there is no direct benefit to you by participating in this study.

CONFIDENTIALITY OF RESPONSES

Your answers are strictly confidential. Only the primary researcher will have access to the confidential raw data.

RIGHT TO WITHDRAW OR DECLINE TO PARTICIPATE

Your participation in this project is completely voluntary. You may choose not to participate without any adverse consequences to you. Should you choose to participate and later wish to withdraw from the study, you may discontinue your participation at this time without incurring adverse consequences.

NOTE: Questions or concerns about participation in the research or subsequent complaints should be addressed first to the researcher, Mary Jackelen-Sterner, second to Dr. Ed Biggerstaff, research advisor and third to Dr. Ted Knous, Chair, UW-Stout Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research, 11 HH, UW-Stout, Menomonie, WI 54751, phone (715) 232-1126.

I attest that I have read and understood the above description, including potential risks, benefits, and my rights as a participant, and that all of my questions about the study have been answered to my satisfaction. I hereby give my informed consent to participate in this research study.

Name _____ Date _____

Interview Questions

1. How would you describe yourself?
2. What *dream* or goal are you working on right now?
3. Have you ever felt torn between the desire to marry and have a family and the desire to have a career? How have you resolved this in your life?
4. When you feel stuck, how do you get yourself back on track?
5. Describe the person or persons in your life who influenced you or encouraged you to follow your *dream*.
6. How have your *dreams* and goals changed over the years?
7. Have you ever had to give up a cherished *dream* in order for something else to happen?
8. How has being in a graduate counseling program changed your life?
9. What do you see as the biggest challenge you face in completing your degree?
10. How will you be different when you have your Master's degree?
11. Have you considered getting further training past the master's degree?

Mind Map Exercise

Please complete before the interview.

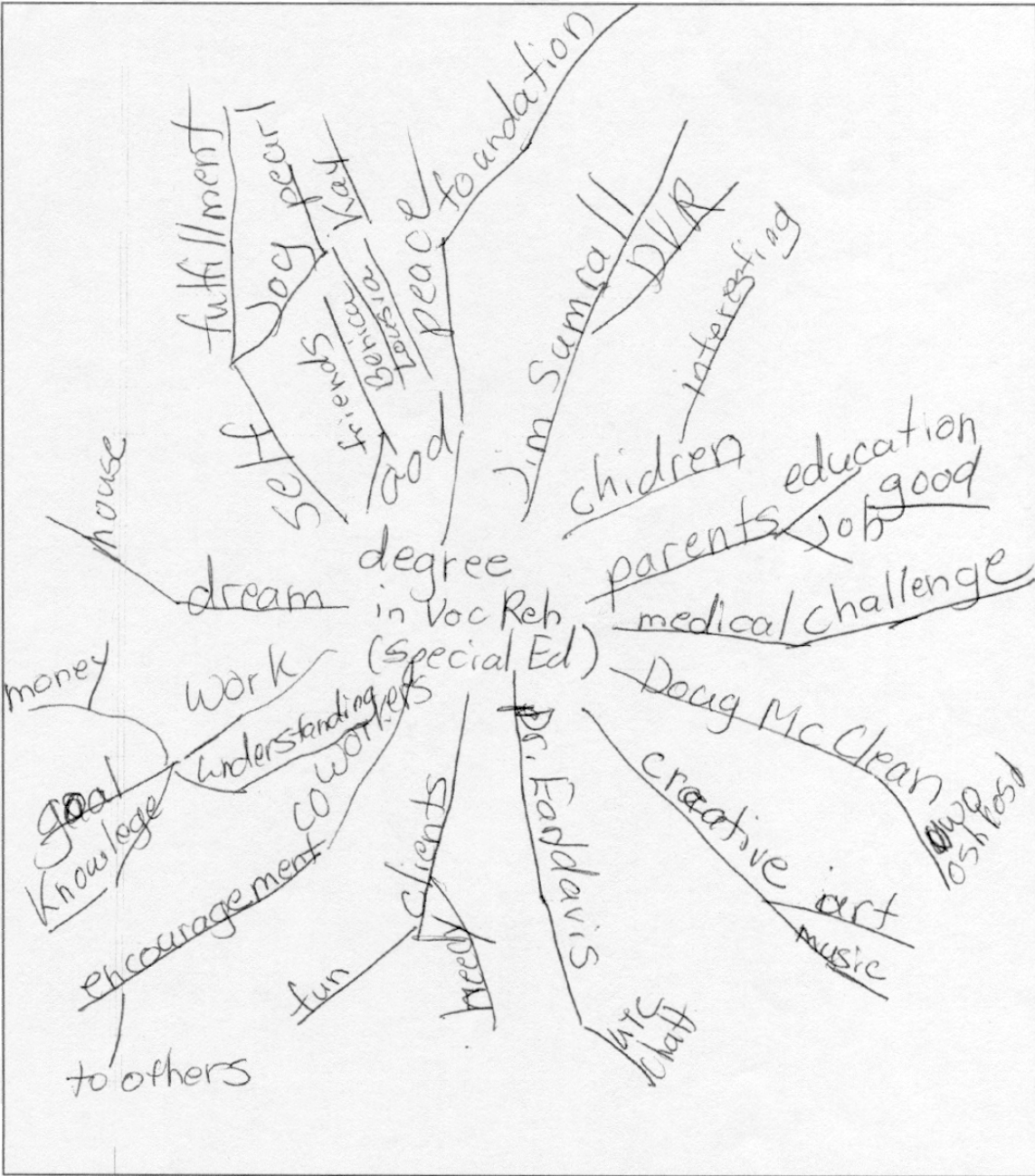
- Mind Maps (Buzan, 1994) are used to generate and organize (☐) ideas and information. For this exercise, you can use pencils, pens, markers, and/or **colored pencils**.
- To make a mind map, start in the center of the page with a main idea (word or image) and work your way outward in all directions using **key words** and **images**. See the examples below.
- You may use the back of this page to do this exercise or use your own paper if you prefer.
- You can do a quick drawing or take more time with it, whichever you prefer.
- The purpose is to organize your associations around the idea of your life's Dream. If you get stumped, just go back to your central image.
- Use **color**, **images** (≈&∂) and anything else that helps you freely make associations concerning Dreams/goals.
- Most importantly, have fun with this exercise!

If you still aren't sure how to do this exercise wait until the interview and we'll discuss it.

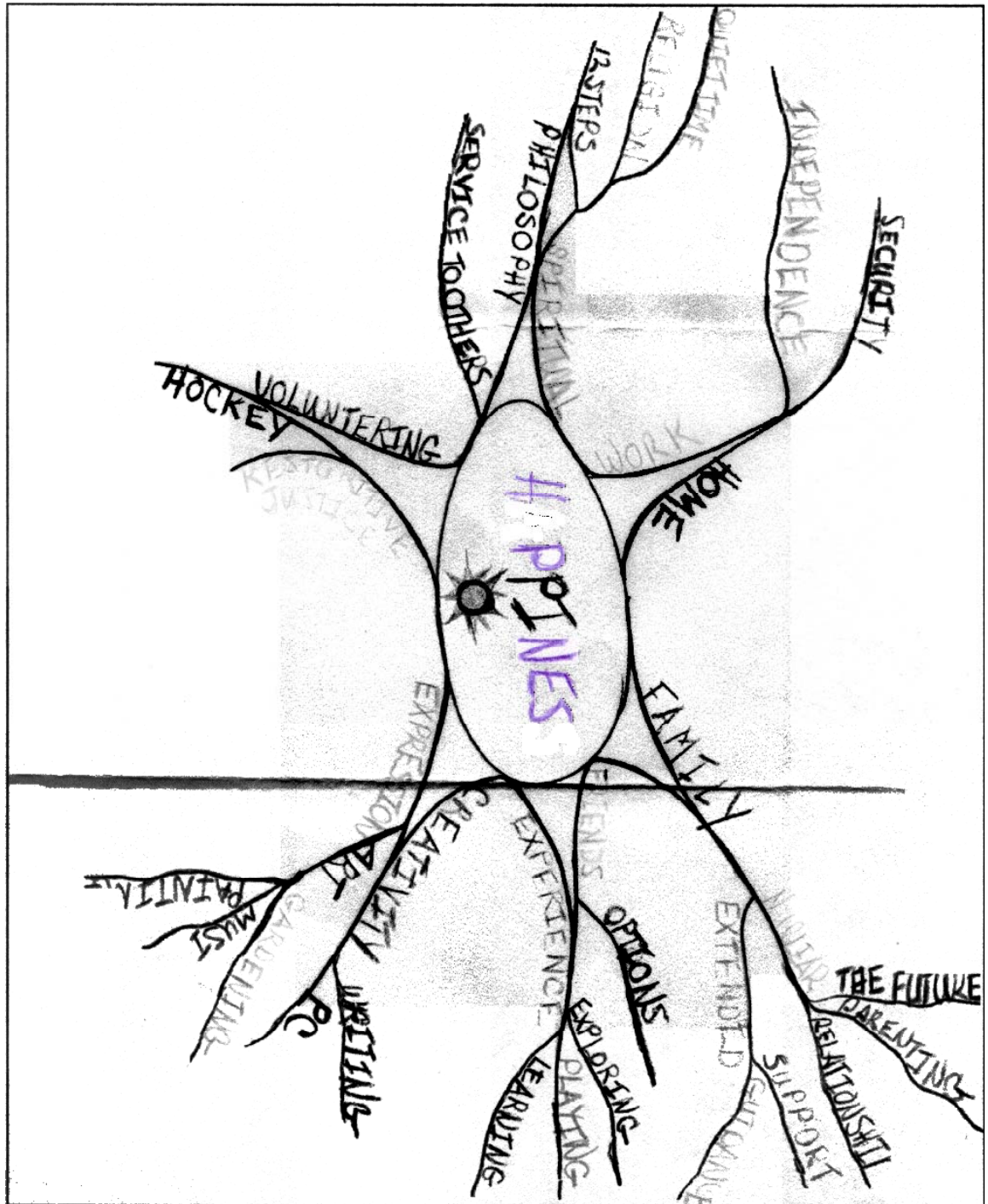
Buzan, T. 1994. The mind map book.

APPENDIX C

Cass's Mind Map



April's Mind Map



Da Mind Map

